

ADVICE FOR 16- & 17-YEAR OLDS WHO ARE AT RISK OF BEING HOMELESS

Are you 16/17 years old
and have nowhere to
stay?



It's normal to feel scared or confused if you don't have a place to stay or have to leave home suddenly. Don't worry!

We will help you understand the options available to you and support you.

Here to help...

If you don't have a safe place to stay, you're staying on a friend's sofa or feeling scared at home, it's really important to tell someone you trust about it as soon as you can.

If you already have someone helping you, like a Social Worker or an Early Help Worker, you should talk to them right away. But if you don't have anyone helping you, it's okay! You can contact Tower Hamlets **Multi-Agency Support Team (MAST)** at mast@towerhamlets.gov.uk.

Tower Hamlets MAST is a special team that helps young people who might not have a home. They are located at **Tower Hamlets Town Hall, 160 Whitechapel Road, London E1 1BJ.**

An adult you know, and trust can ask for help for you by making a referral to MAST, or you can make the referral yourself.

If you're homeless and don't have anywhere safe to stay, a social worker will see you on the same day to figure out how we can help you.

What happens next?

A social worker will talk to you and your parents, carers, or guardians to understand what's happening.

This is because your parents or guardians are in charge of taking care of you until you're 18 years old. The social worker will ask you questions about why you don't have anywhere to stay and if it's safe for you to go back home. If it's not safe, and you don't have anywhere else to go, the social worker will find a safe place for you to stay right away.

The social worker will also ask if you can do things like cook, take care of yourself, and manage your money. They want to make sure you'll be okay on your own.

While we're figuring things out, the council will make sure you have a safe place to stay. It might be somewhere to stay for a little while, or you might stay with a family member if possible.

After talking with you and your family, a few things could happen....

1. You might be able to go back home to your family if it's safe.
2. Your Social Worker might help you and your family talk things out to make going home safe for you and to help sort out any issues, this is called mediation. Or you might stay with other family members or adults you trust.
3. If going home isn't safe, Children's Services might help find you a place to stay and give you a social worker to help you. This means you will become a child that is looked after by the council.
4. If you don't want to be looked after, we can help you to make an application to the housing department for a place to stay. Your social worker will check if you're ready to make this decision. They'll help you under what we call a 'child in need' plan to make sure you're okay. This means we will give you support and help and check in on you.

If we decide that you are homeless or you need to be child that is looked after by the council...

- We will keep helping you and your family to try and work things out so you can go back home. While we do this, we'll give you a safe place to stay and help you.
- The kind of place you stay in and the help you get will depend on what you need. We'll listen to what you want and try to find the best place for you. It might be with a foster family, in a special home, with another family member, or in a place where you have some extra help.
- You'll have this place to stay until you're 18. We will act as your parent; we call this corporate parenting. We'll make a plan to help you with things like going to school, finding a job, or going to college. You'll have someone check in on you regularly to make sure you're okay.
- You'll get some money every week to help you with things like buying food and clothes, going to school, and getting healthcare. We'll also help you learn how to manage your money and do things on your own.
- An important person called an Independent Reviewing Officer will check in on your situation to make sure we're taking care of you properly and listening to what you have to say.

- As you get older, we'll still be here to help you, even after you turn 18. We'll help you make plans for when you're an adult and support you as you move into your own place.

If you don't have a place to stay and you decide not to be a child looked after, the Housing Department will help you find somewhere to live under a special law called the Housing Act.

Here's what happens:

- The Housing Department will work with your social worker to try to make sure you don't become homeless.
- If the Housing Department agree that you're homeless and need help, they'll find a place for you to live. They'll make sure it's suitable for you and meets your needs.
- You'll get help from a support worker who will help you with things like money, school, finding a job, and going to the doctor.
- You'll have to sign a paper called a tenancy agreement with the person who owns the place where you'll live. You'll need to pay rent and other costs, but don't worry, the Housing Department can help you with this.
- If you don't pay your rent or follow the rules, you might have to leave your place. But don't worry, if you need help, there are people who can support you.
- You can stay in this place even after you turn 18.
- If you change your mind and want to stay with a foster family or in a special home, you can do that before you turn 18.
- If you need more information or someone to talk to about your options, you can ask your social worker or talk to someone called an advocate who can give you advice.

If you need more help understanding your options:

<p>Coram Voice (Advocacy Service for Tower Hamlets Looked After Children and Care Leavers) Freephone: 'Always Heard' Helpline Service 0808 800 5792 Email help@coramvoice.org.uk Website: www.coramvoice.org.uk</p>	<p>Shelter 0808 800 4444 (UK) www.shelter.org.uk</p>
<p>CAB www.citizensadvice.org.uk</p>	<p>Just for Kids Law 020 3174 2279 www.justforkidslaw.org</p>
<p>New Horizon Youth Centre Get help - New Horizon Youth Centre (www.nhyouthcentre.org.uk)</p>	<p>Runaway Helpline www.runawayhelpline.org.uk This is a national, 24-hour free helpline for anyone aged 17 or under who has run away or been forced to leave home.</p>

Please sign below to show that you understand the information and what we have spoken about:

Name-----

Date-----